

DWESHULA

By MRS. AMY BRIDGMAN COWLES

OF THE ZULU MISSION OF THE AMERICAN BOARD



A heathen hero has recently died, an old, white-headed Zulu who fought for thirty years "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world," and finally won out and died a glorious death. His name was Dweshula (Dwe-shoo-lah). When dying he sent for the whole tribe to come and see him. With his last breath he told them that for many, many years he had fought to be a Christian, that he had conquered and God had blessed him in it. "Now," he said, "when I am gone, I want you all to become Christians."

One year has passed since Dweshula's death, and now in that remote spot, so far away in the wilds that missionaries can only rarely reach it, a great turning to the Lord has taken place. Thirty men have cut off their head-rings, and are washing off the grease and clay and are putting on clothes. Huts are being torn down and civilized houses are going up in their place. The school is so full that a pleading letter has come from our school-teacher there, begging for a second teacher to come and help. One of our

preachers went there recently to hold a service. He had 300 at the service, a number quite beyond the capacity of the little sod church which Dweshula had had his son build for them some years before. So 300 went out on to a mountain to praise and pray.

The people say to each other, "It is Dweshula's God we are worshipping," and Dweshula's God is dear to them. They love the God who could make such a man. In times of famine, was it not Dweshula who used to send his cows here and there to the poor to be milked for the babies until the stress was over? Was it not Dweshula who used to inspan his fourteen oxen into his big wagon and cart a load of corn for the poor people free of charge? Was it not Dweshula who would sometimes pay the fine of some sinner whom the law had arrested?

A little heathen boy about ten used to hear Dweshula pray. One day he went to his mother in her hut and asked her to pray with him as Dweshula did. The mother said: "Why I am not a Christian; I cannot pray. Why do you ask me? No, I cannot pray." But the persistent little chap kept on with his pleading until at last the mother, to hush the teasing, went off outside into the grass with her small son, and they both kneeled down and prayed; the mother half naked, with the skins tied about her waist, and the boy quite nude, save for a fig-leaf of skins, knelt there together and prayed to the unknown God. A few days later the little fellow was taken suddenly ill and died after an illness of two days. This strange circumstance made a great impression on all the people. The

mother became a Christian straightway, and has been a stanch church member ever since. Other children who have passed away are spoken of as dead; their graves are hidden away in the deep grass or bushes according to heathen customs, and no one knows where their bodies lie. But this little boy who so suddenly died is to this day spoken of as "the sleeping one," for did he not die a Christian, and will he not rise again? His grave has a fence around it, and is cared for—an unheard of thing in heathendom.

And so Dweshula led this little one, and his mother also, to God. Yet in all these years when he had never ceased to pray, and when his acts of kindness won the hearts of all who knew him, he had not come out clearly as a Christian. A mighty conflict was ever raging in his soul. Native preachers from the Umzumbe church came up to hold services on Sunday quite regularly, so he had an uplifting influence about once a week. Often that influence lifted him up so high, he was almost persuaded to give up his beer-pots and his wives and all his ways of darkness. At such times he would take off his skin aprons and put on trousers and shirt and coat and **almost** renounce heathenism. Then down he would go again, and off came his trousers and on came the skins. Yet even when the skins were on, he would not cease to pray, nor to encourage his children to become Christians, nor himself to attend church. While still in skins he learned to read and to pick laboriously out a few thoughts from the New Testament. For thirty years trousers and skins alternated in a long off and on process, and the con-

flict raged in that heathen soul. In that time Dweshula took unto himself six wives. He was a rich man, possessing many cattle. He held so high a position in his tribe, that he stood a good chance of becoming chief, had he lived.

Two years before he died the victory was won. Dweshula at last cut clean away from heathenism. He gave up his beer and all his wives save one. For the wives from whom he separated he provided houses and a comfortable support. After thirty years of struggle he joined the church, and the conflict was ended.

Poor old Dweshula! What did he have to help him in all those years? Around him oceans of heathenism of the darkest sort; to save him, only the outstretched hand of the Umzumbe church, and back of that the hand of the American churches. Yet back of all was the hand of the Saviour, whose messengers had brought to him the gospel which giveth salvation.

If you will make a gift to Dweshula's people, send it to
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